

## Who Thrives in the Kingdom? (Part 1)

**Introduction:** We are in the midst of a sermon series on discipleship. We are trying to better understand what it means to be apprenticed to Jesus. In Matthew 28, Jesus said that making disciples involves "teaching them everything" that He commanded. When you look through the Gospel of Matthew, the Sermon on the Mount is one of the large blocks of teachings that contains commands that we are to obey. It is teaching about how Jesus' disciples are supposed to live. And so it is a great place to focus as we seek to obey everything Jesus commanded. We trust that as we work through the Sermon on the Mount over the next number of weeks we will increasingly put into practice this teaching about we as disciples of Jesus are to live. This week we begin by looking at the first four of the eight beatitudes that Jesus pronounces.

**Opening Discussion:** What talk in the past had a significant impact on you (doesn't have to be a spiritual talk)?

### Read Matthew 4:23-5:1; 7:28-29

1. Who was in Jesus' audience when He gave the Sermon on the Mount?
2. What, if anything, is significant about this?

Steve said:

The beatitudes are short statements about just who thrives in the kingdom of God. The name beatitudes comes from the Latin word for blessed. In the beatitudes Jesus shatters our preconceptions about who really thrives in the kingdom of God. Basically Jesus says that the kingdom is for people who have everything wrong with them, people who are so sad they could cry, people who are easily taken advantage of, and people who are starving spiritually. . . .The term "blessed" has the connotation of favored or approved. Those who are pronounced blessed in the beatitudes are in a favored position with God in the sense they He is inclined toward them. Those described by the beatitudes are poised to experience God's generosity as they enter the kingdom through faith in Jesus and as they live by faith in the kingdom. Jesus is describing those who are really "well off" (as Willard describes it).

### Read Matthew 5:2-6

3. What kind of people does Jesus say thrive in the kingdom of God?
4. Is this how you have typically thought about thriving in the kingdom of God? Why or why not?

5. Steve said that the core idea of being "poor in spirit" is spiritual poverty (v. 3). Why are the spiritually impoverished blessed?
6. Have you tended to think of mourning (v. 4) as something that puts you in a favored position with God? Why or why not?
7. Is there anything that is causing you to mourn right now?
8. Have you ever thought that pain, loss and grief were evidence of God's disfavor - that He wants you to be miserable? What does verse 4 say about this?
9. How would you describe what it means to be "gentle" (v. 5)?
10. Why do you think being gentle is a blessed position in God's eyes?
11. What does it mean to "hunger and thirst for righteousness" (v. 6)? [Note: "righteousness" is used here in the sense of right behavior, a pattern of life that conforms to God's will.]
12. What helps you have a growing hunger and thirst for righteousness?